Officers of the Black Student Union

Black Cultural Center: Proposed Use

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A review of the memorandums on the Cultural Center helps to bring into perspective the current problems surrounding the Center. Memorandums from the College focus on questions of space and allocation of funds for initial repairs (i.e. painting and removal of walls). The petition from the Black students speaks to the plight of the minority person in our society in general and the minority student at Middlebury in particular. Neither group gave much consideration to the actual goals and operations of the proposed Center. If the present situation continues the Center will become a mere social space for the minority students and a place for occasional activities (dubbed as interracial progress) sponsored by the minority students for the general community. The space and the concept of a cultural center is much too valuable to waste in this fashion.

As time has passed and the initial excitement about the acquisition of the Cultural Center has diminished, it has become painfully clear that the Center is not workable in its present form. The Student Forum believes the Center is a regular feature of College and therefore should be budgeted from the general College funds. On the other hand, the College has informed B.S.U. that operating funds will not be forthcoming because the Center is a student activity.

I personally believe that to operate the Center as a student activity would be a major mistake. The Center should operate in much the same manner as the Johnson Music and Art Building. I submit the following points for your discussion and, hopefully, approval.

1. The establishment of an advisory board to formulate and guide policy for the Center. The board would consist of four faculty representatives (from the Music, Art, American Literature, History, Anthropology and/or Spanish departments) four members of the Black Student Union (including the chairperson), a representative from the student Forum (hopefully a member of the Finance Committee), and a representative from the Library.

2. Appointment of an Administrator for the Center by the President of the College. The function of the administrator would be to direct the implementation of the Center's program.

3. Use of Coltrane Lounge and the Seminar Room for classroom space. The classes held in these rooms would have to be approved by the Advisory Board. I would imagine that it would be appropriate to have only classes that dealt with Black people (i.e. Black Literature, African History, etc.).

4. The on-going functions (the Library and Artifact Room) of the Center would be budgeted from the College's general funds. This assumes that the initial expense of the Library is being met by other funds.

5. Speakers and other one-shot programs would be funded through normal student channels (M.C.A.B. and the Student Forum).

6. Up-keep and maintenance of the Center would be budgeted in the same manner as other academic buildings.

7. The Black Student Union would be responsible for raising funds for decorative changes in the Center.